RAJYA SABHA

Wednesday, the 26th February, 1992/ 7th Phalguna, 1913 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock.

Mr. Chairman in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MR. CHAIRMAN : Question No. 21.

THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, you were good enough to assure the House yesterday that the Finance Minister would reply to the privilege notice within 24 hours. I am afraid, 24 hours are over....(*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Let us be exact. It is not over. You find out what time I made the announcement.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY : Yesterday the Finance Minister was in the house when we raised the issue. He maintained a deafening silence in the House, while he opened his mouth in the other House. (*Interruptions*). It constitutes another breach of privilege of the House.

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH : He is a Member of this House.

MR. CHAIRMAN : After Question Hour. Question No. 21.

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH : Sir, the Finance Minister is a member of this House. He did not make a statement here. He has committed a contempt of the House. (*Interruptions*).

MR. CHAIRMAN : Question No. 21.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY : You have asked him to give his reply within twenty-four hours. You kindly summon the Finance Minister here. He chose to remain totally silent in the House yesterday.

MR. CHAIRMAN : After Question Hour, we will see what we can do.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY : Sir, in the morning, I submitted a document to you.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Question No. 21. (*Interruptions*).

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY : The question of breach of priviledge of the House is more important.

MR. CHAIRMAN : In regard to the question of breach of privilege, I will get his reply in twenty-four hours. After I get his reply, I will decide. You know the rules. Why are you raising it now ? You can raise it after Question Hour. I have asked him to give his reply within twenty-four hours.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: Sir, in the morning, I submitted a document to you, an authenticated document.

MR. CHAIRMAN : I am looking into it. (*Interruptions*) You know everything. Why are you doing it ? You have talked to me. Why are you raising it here now ? (*Interruptions*). Don't do this. You have talked to me and somthing is settled. Why do you do this ? Let us wait.

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH : Sir, the Finance Minister has committed a contempt of the House. You gave him twenty-four hours. This time-limit will be over at 11.40 a.m. today. But in the meantime, he has committed a contempt of the House. While he did not make a statement here in spite of the fact that a question of breach of privilege against him was raised here yesterday, outside this House, he made a statement.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Let us now take up Question Hour. Question No. 21. (*Interruptions*) I cannot make a Member speak. It is for him to speak or not to speak. Now, Question No. 21.

Gas exploration projects in Bihar

*21. SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR : Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the ONGC has decided to abandon the gas exploration projects in Bihar; and

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR) : (a) No Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

श्री अश्विनी कुमार : माननीय सभापति महोदय, जो यह प्रश्न का उत्तर दिया गया है तथ्यों को छिपाने के लिए अत्यन्त उत्तम है, इसके लिए मैं मंत्री जी को बहुत बधाई देता हूं। वहां बिहार की स्थिति यह है कि 1982 से वहां पर रिग्ज काम कर रहे हैं। कूएं खोदे गये हैं, उनमें गैस मिली है और अब धीरे-धीरे पहले तीन रिग्ज

काम करती थीं लेकिन अब एक काम कर रही है । जयनगर में धूलीपट्टी में गैस मिली है । पिछले सदन में गुरुपदस्वामी मंत्री थे, इन्होंने कहा था कि वहां गैस और तेल मिलने की संभावना है । अब जो एक रिग काम कर रही थी तीन रिगों के अन्दर से, उसको भी आसाम भेजने का निर्णय ले लिया गया है । क्या यह काम जो इसका उत्तर है वह कि बन्द नहीं किया गया है इसकी कहां तक सत्यता मानी जायेगी ? क्या यह सत्य है कि जो तीन रिग एक रिग पर आये और अब एक रिग को भी असम भेजने का इन्होंने निर्णय करलिया है ?

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR: Sir, to the question whether gas exploration projects are being abandoned in Bihar, we have categorically replied in the negative.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He wants to know whether the one rig which is there is being transferred from there. Or, will you do exploration without rigs?

DR. BAPU KALDATE: It is not rigging of elections.

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR: Sir, five exploratory wells have been dug in Bihar. (*Interruptions*) In all these wells, there was no evidence of any hydro-carbons. The sixth well is being dug at Kadma in West Champaran District. The drilling and seismic surveys are continuing. I have here the entire statistics of the work which has been going on ever since exploration started in Bihar in 1955-56. One rig is now working there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you going to transfer it? This is what he wants to know. He wants to be assured that you will not transfer the rig from there.

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI B. SHANKARANAND): Mr. Chairman, we want to continue our activities for exploration of oil and gas in Bihar. We have given the necessary licence to Oil India. Unfortunately, the Government of Bihar itself has not given the licence for exploration.

श्री अश्विनी कुमार : : सभापति महोदय, स्टेट मिनिस्टर और केबिनेट मिनिस्टर दोनों के ही वक्तव्यों में विरोध है । वह कहते हैं कि हम ड्रिलिंग कर रहे हैं और वह कहते हैं कि हम को लायसेंस नहीं मिला ।

श्री सभापति : यह शायद दूसरी जगह का होगा ।

श्री अश्विनी कुमार : दोनों में अंतर्विरोध है ।

श्री बी० शंकरानन्द : मैंने आयल इंडिया के बारे में कहा है, और ओ० एन० जी०सी० के बारे मे नहीं कहा है ।

श्री अश्विनी कुमार : सभापति महोदय, मेरा दूसरा प्रश्न है कि या तो वह निर्णय कर लें कि वहां बिल्कुल आयल गैस नहीं है। यह कहते हैं कि संभावनायें हैं । पिछले मंत्रिमंडल में जब गुरुपदस्वामी जी वहां बैठे थे तो उन्होंने स्पष्ट कहा था कि संभावनायें हैं और वहां काम किया जायेगा । तो क्या सरकार बदलने से यह हुआ, दूसरे, क्या यह सत्य है कि ओ०एन०जी०सी० की जो वर्कर्स यूनियन है बिहार के अन्दर, उन्होंने इसका घोर विरोध किया है और इसके कारण वहां के ओ०एन० जी०सी० के आफिसर्स बिहार के वर्कर्स से तंग आकर काम बन्द कर रहे हैं ?

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR: We have not said that there is no possibility of finding oil or gas in Bihar. Bihar is in Gangetic basin which comes under category two basins with known occurrence of hydro carbons. What we have said is that in the first wells that we have drilled, there is no evidence of hydro carbon. What my senior collageue said was that the Oil India has a programme of exploration for which sanction was given by the Central Government on 25th May, 1990. After almost one and a half years the Bihar Government have not so far given the petroleum exploration licence for exploration by Oil India in Bihar. We will continue the exploration. We have a programme. We have said that there is no decision of soft pedalling or abandoning the exploration effort.

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: The ONGC staff is not allowing the work to be done. You are not answering that. His supplementary was about ONGC. They have created a situation by which the

ONGC officers and others are not working.

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR: They are working. We are not aware of obstruction to the working and the work is going on.

श्री सुरेन्द्रजीत सिंह अहलूवालिया : सभापति महोदय, मैं आपके माध्यम से मंत्री महोदय से जानना चाहूंगा कि बिहार में प्राकृतिक गैस आयोग द्वारा कितने वेल्स पर आज तक काम किया गया है और कितने वेल्स को हकानोमिकली वाएबल समझा गया है और उसमें कितनों के बारे में निर्णय किया गया है कि ये एकानोमिकली वाएबल नहीं हैं और उन्हें बन्द करने की बात सोची गई है ? दूसरे, मंत्री महोदय ने बताया कि बिहार सरकार वहां प्राकृतिक गैस के लिये वेल्स को ड्रिल करने के बारे में लायसेंस नहीं दे रही है। मैं आपके माध्यम से मंत्री महोदय से जानना चाहूंगा कि कितने वेल्स की परमीशन के लिए केन्द्रीय सरकार ने लायसेंस की मांग की थी और कब की थी और बिहार सरकार ने आज तक कितने इलाकों के लिए लायसेंस दिये हैं ? अगर नहीं दिये तो क्यों नहीं उस पर कार्यवाही हुई है ? यह बताने की कृपा करें।

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR: Sir, the first part of the question has already been answered by us. Five wells have been drilled with no evidence of hydro carbon. The sixth well is under exploration. Oil India Ltd. had asked for petroleum exploration licence in the Ganga Valley Basin covering an area of 46,000 sq. kms. of which 17,500 sq. kms. falls in Bihar, stretching over nine districts, namely, Paschimi Champaran, Purbi Champaran, Gopalganj, Siwan, Muzaffarpur, Sitamarhi, Madhubani, Darbhanga and Saran. This is a total exploration programme starting with seismic surveys and then going on to actual drilling of wells. It is for this that the petroleums exploration licence was asked on 25th May, 1990 and the approval is awaited from the Government of Bihar.

श्री शंकर दयाल सिंह : मान्यवर, मैं आपके माध्यम से माननीय मंत्री महोदय से जानना चाहता हूं कि आपने बंगाल में कितनी जगहों पर इसके लिये कुंओं की खुदाई की है और आसाम में कितनी जगहों पर खुदाई की है ? इसके साथ ही मंत्री जी यह भी बतायें कि यह जो बिहार में इसकी खुदाई तेल और प्राकृतिक गैस आयोग की ओर से की गई है, वह गंगा बेसिन में कितनी जगहों पर हुई है ? इसके साथ ही यह भी जानना चाहूंगा कि जो बिहार सरकार के बारे में आपने कहा, तो बिहार सरकार को कब लिखा गया ? कब रिमाइंडर दिया गया ? कब आपके कौन अधिकारी मिले और क्या बिहार सरकार ने कोई ऐसा पत्र भेजा है कि वह लायसेंस नहीं देंगे ? कृपया दोनों प्रश्नों का उत्तर दें।

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR Sir, as on 31-3-91, 33 online wells and seven offshore wells—a total of 40 wells—have been drilled in West Bengal. Five wells have been drilled in Uttar Pradesh.

SHRI SHANKAR DAYAL SINGH: I am not asking about Uttar Pradesh; I am asking about only Bengal and Assam.

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR: Sir, 826 wells have been drilled in Asam. As regards Bihar, we have already answered. The Ganga Basin includes parts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. I have given separate statistics of Bihar as well as Uttar Pradesh. I have already answered that on 25th May 1990 a request was made to the Government of Bihar, and Oil India has been constantly pressing the Government of Bihar. It is not known why they have not given the sanction yet.

PROF. CHANDRESH P. THAKUR: Mr. Chairman, this question is linked to the larger issue that we want to step up the indigenous supply of hydrocarbons. As we all know, ONGC and Oil India have not been able to live up to the targets that have been given to them. In this context, will the Minister assure that exploration work will be steped up substantially, not for intensity in the well-known area but for spread in the marginally less known area? In that context, as the statistics indicate, the effort in Bihar has been marginal. Does it indicate a lukewarm approach of the ONGC and Oil India or the Government of India, or does it indicate the lack of cooperation, inefficiency or hostility of the Bihar Government

towards developmental effort? If the answer to both these is yes, then will the Minister assure that the share of Bihar in drilling sites will be multiplied to catch up with the rest of the States and, secondly, if the Bihar Government is refusing or is showing hostitity, the Chief Minister and the Prime Minister would be encouraged to sort this out and persuasive efforts of the Government would prevail? What efforts is the Minister trying to make in this regard?

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND: Sir, I very well appreciate the honourable Member's serious concern about the activities of exploration in Bihar. I can, at the outset, assure the honouroble Member that our approach—the approach of the Government as well as of the oil companies—with regard to finding oil and gas in Bihar is not lukewarm but positively warm. Let him not be under the impression that we are not at all taking any interest in Bihar. We have already offered two blocks in Bihar for the fourth round of oil exploration and we are expecting bids from both national and international companies and we hope that the speed of finding oil or the activities of finding oil or gas in Bihar will be stepped up and we will not lag bhind any expectation of the honourable Member.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Sir, while one would like to be encouraged by the reply which the honourable Minister has given just now, the figures, as Prof. Thakur has said, are very dismal. This work was started in Bihar in the year 1982, and between 1982 and 1992—ten years—we have dug only five wells. If that be the rate of digging with the positive warmth which the honourable Minister has shown, then I do not know what the future is going to hold. But the question that I am goling to ask is, ONGC has been doing this work in Bihar for many years.

They obviously have a licence from the Bihar Government. Now, what is it which has promoted the Government of India to transfer this responsibility from the ONGC to the Oil India? Now they expect the Oil India to obtain a new licence and then go into it. I would suggest that while the Government of India should use its persuasive skills—our friends from the Janata Dal are also sitting here—I would request them to use their influence with the Bihar Government to see that, if the Government of India insists on the Indian Oil or the Oil India exploring this, then, they should also lend their good offices. So, will the Minister kindly respond to this, Sir ?

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND : I wish to inform the House that it is not only the Oil India that is doing the exploratory work in Bihar but the ONGC is also doing it. There are two oil companies which are doing this work in Bihar. The work in Bihar started not from 1980 : it started from 1956-57. It is for the last 21 years that the work of exploration is on there. Let the hon. Member listen to me. I am stating the facts. I don't want to mislead the House. That is the rezson why I am stating the facts.

But, let the House not be under the impression that blind drilling of wells will find oil. It is a completely wrong impression. We have to find out. First there has to be an intensive seismic survey. There have to be studies of the geological and geo-physical conditions. If these studies support the idea and further the activities for drilling wells, then, obviously that can be done. Without these surveys you cannot do blind drilling of wells to find oil. That is the reason.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA : No, Sir. This does not answer the question. The work of exploration has been going on for 21 years according to your own admission, and the net result is five wells Now he is talking about surveys. (*Interruptions*) Sir, the Minister of State has just now mentioned that they are absolutely positive that it has the deposit of hydrocarbon and that they are proceedign on that basis. Now, where is the question of a fresh survey ? If a fresh survey is needed, than, what are they doing about it ?

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND : I am very sorry. The hon. Member is mistaken. We have continued even seismic surveys and scientific surveys about this. We have not stopped doing that work. Unfortunately, the ONGC has not been able to find any oil or gas. But the OIL wants to do some work in the districts which my colleague has mentioned. There we want a licence, but they are not giving the licence.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA : Sir, I am sorry. If I am mistaken, I would like to be enlightend. There is just one area, one distr.ct of Bihar where during the last 21 years or since 1956 they have dug five wells only. Now, if he considers this to be a satisfactory progress, then, let the House judge whether it is a satisfactory progress. There are other where they have dug 80 wells, 90 wells in order to decide whether there is deposit of hydro-carbon or not, and Bihar is dismissed with just five wells in 21 years.

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR : Sir, the five wells are not in one district. These are in Champaran, Purnea, Betia, Madhubani and again inwest Champaran,

Secondly, Sir, the hon. Member is aware that almost 80 per cent of the hydro-carbon already found in the country is from the Bombay offshore. So, there is a particular distribution of hydro-carbon resources in the country, We have a programme of seismic surveys, geo-magnetic surveys and so on which lead on to exploratory drilling of wells, and when hydro-carbons are actually found, then, exploitation starts. This is the process of which hon. Members are fully aware. We have not neglected Bihar in any manner. The exploratroy programme is going on the basis of scientific principles.

SHRI BHUVNESH CHATURVEDI : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to ps the Minister whether these rigging tactics are also being shifted to Rajasthan beca-use the same thing, the same apprehen use are being felt in Rajasthan that the ONGC is very slow in exploring oil and gas. on would like to be enlightened whether the same slow process of Bihar is being shifted to Rajasthan.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Rajasthan has found gas.

SHRI BHUVNESH CHATURVEDI : Sir, the Minister is replying for all the States.

MR. CHAIRMAN : How are you equating them ? They found no gas in Bihar, but they have found gas in Rajas-than.

SHRI BHUVNESH CHATURVEDI : The Minister is a young person. Let him reply, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Mr. Minister, have you got information on Rajasthan ?

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR : If they want the details of the exploration programme in Rajasthan, they have to ask a separate question.

MR. CHAIRMAN : He requires notice.

श्री चतुरानन मिश्र : सभापति महोदय, मंत्री महोदय ने बताया कि जो एक रिग वहां है, उसको वह नहीं हटायेंगे, उसके मुताबिक काम करेंगे, वह रिग रहेगा ।

लेकिन हमको जो सूचना है, वह यह है कि आठवीं योजना के अन्दर कोई भी पैसा इस काम के लिये एलाट नहीं किया गया है । तो पहली बात हम यह जानना चाहेंगे कि अगर आप रिग वहां रखेंगे, तो जब पैसा एलाट नहीं किया गया था, तो काम कैसे होगा, इस पर प्रकाश डालें ।

दूसरा, हम आपसे जानना चाहेंगे कि आपकी रिपोर्ट मिसलीडिंग है । मधुबनी के अन्दर वहां हाइड्रोकार्बन गैस मिली है । वह गैस वहां पर अवेलेबल है और अगर वह अवेलबल है, तो उसके बारे में रिपोर्ट की कापी हमको दी जाय, ताकि हम देखें कि सच्ची बात क्या है ?

तीसरी बात हम जानना चाहेंगे कि कौन सा ब्लाक आपने फारेन और दूसरीप्राइवेट के लिए आपने बिहार में एलाट किया है, इसकी जानकारी दें ।

इन तीन बिन्दुओं पर आप स्पेसिफिक रेप्लाई दें ।

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR : As I have already stated Oil India has the programme of exploration in Bihar, which will go into the Eighth Plan as soon as the licence is received. The Eighth Plan has not finalised. On the basis of the scientific discoveries and analysis, ONGC programme in Bihar in the Eighth Plan will be finalised. That will, of course, depend on the findings of the sixth well we are drilling.

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA : But how do you propose to go about that when there is no provision for that ?

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR : The interest of the Government of India has in Bihar is exemplified by the fact that three blocks in Bihar have been offered for international and national companies for exploratory drilling. Among the 72 blocks, which have been offered in the fourth round of bidding, three blocks are in Bihar. For this programme the final date for the tender is April middle. This programme will aslo be during the Eighth Plan.

MR. CHAIRMAN : His specific question was whether hydro-carbon gas has been found in Madhubani ?

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA : Hydro-carbon gas has been found there. So, I ask you that that report should be laid on the Table of the House.

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR : Madhubani-I : drilled depth : 5,957 metres. Results ; five horizons were tested between 3,375 and 4,945 metres. No hydro-carbon indications were found.

Import of petroleum products from erstwhile Soviet Union

*22. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA :† DR. BAPU KALDATE :

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state :

(a) what is the annual import of petroleum products from the arstwhile Soviet Union;

(b) whether it is a fact that as a result of independence of the former Soviet Republics, the supply of Petroleum products has been suspended;

(c) if so, what is its likely overall impact on the supply of petroleum products indicating the estimated gap between demand and supply as a consequence thereof ;

(d) whether any negotiations have been conducted with the Russian Republic for the resumption of supply of Petroleum products; and

(e) if so, the outcome thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR) : (a) to (c) The contract with M/s. S.N.E. during 1991 was for the import of 4·5 MMT crude oil, 0·585 MMT SKO and 1·7 MMT HSD. The actual supplies were 3·168 MMT, 0·409 MMT and 1·065 MMT respectively. The shortfalls in the supplies are being met from alternative sources. In terms of the Trade Protocol signed with the Russian Federation, there is a provision for the imort of 4·0 MMT crude oil, 0·6 MMT HSD and 0·5 MMT SKO during 1992.

SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA : The Minister's reply is inadequate. I would like to know this is a fact that oil import is a big drain on our economy and for the year 1992-93, nearly Rs. 30,000 crores will be needed for oil import only. The Minister reply said that the shortfalls in the supplies are being met from alternate sources. What are these alternate sources ? Previously we know that all the oil imports were done the Soviet Union. Now the Soviet Union has disintegrated. I would like to know from the Minister, with whom the trade protocal was signed. The Minister says "In therms of the trade protocol signed with the Russian Federation, there is a provision for import of 4·0 MMT crude oil, 0·6 MMT HSD and 0·5 MM T SKO during 1992." I would like to know when this protocol was signed and what are the terms of reference ? As far as I know, Russia has refused to supply under Rupee·Rouble transaction. I would like to know whether this trade protocol has been signed through the Rupee-Rouble transaction or the payment would be done through Doller to the Russian Federation.

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR : Sir, the answer to the first part of the question is, yes. Our oil imports are a drain on our foreign exchange resources. But the figures stated by the hon. Member is not correct. It is not Rs. 30,000 crores but it will be Rs. 12,000 to Rs. 14,000 crores of foreign exchange outgo this year for import of about 20 million tonnes of crude and 10 million tonnes of petroleum products.

There is a shortfall of supplies from the erstwhile Soviet Union. The shortfall has already been mentioned in the main answered. It is 1·4 million tonnes of crude, 0·2 million tonnes of kerosene , 0·6 million tonnes of high speed diesel from the erstwhile Soviet Union for the calender year 1991. This shortfall has been met from alternative sources. These alternative sources are through spot buyings. Whenever there is a shortfall which we cannot meet from the term contracts. this shortfall is offeredd for sport purchases for which tenders are floated every month and spot contracts given on competitive terms to whoever gives the best terms for the country.

The trade protocol with the successor State of the USSR, the main successor State, the Russian Federation was signed only on Friday last and the figures of supplies have already been given in the main answer. This is stipulated as Rupee trade. The details will be worked out after exchange of delegations between the two countries.

SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA : The hon. Minister says that the shortfall in the supplies has been met from the alternative sources. What are the alternative sources ? May I know from the Minister whether the protocol signed with the

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shrimati Kamla Sinha.